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PROGRAM NBC Nightly News

STATION WRC-TV  
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DATE December 4, 1982 7:20 P.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT CIA Plane Incident

CHUCK SCARBOROUGH: Russia shot down a CIA spy plane with eight or nine men aboard in 1960, before the downing of a U-2 spy plane that same year. None of the men aboard the CIA plane have ever been accounted for by the Russians. Now, that information was released tonight by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It's based on secret hearings held more than 20 years ago.

Richard Valeriani reports.

RICHARD VALERIANI: During the 1960 hearings, then-CIA Director Allen Dulles testified taht sometime before the U-2 incident another CIA plane had gone down in the Soviet Union. In the full transcript, made public tonight, Dulles said the plane was manned by employees of the CIA in civilian clothes. It was an entirely civilian intelligence operation. Dulles also said the Soviets haven't told us what happened to eight or nine of the crew. Committee staff members say they still don't know what happened to the crew.

As for the U-2 incident itself, the transcript does not clarify the purpose of the mission, the timing of the flight so close to the Eisenhower-Khrushchev summit, or the failure of pilot Francis Gary Powers to follow instructions to destroy the plane in the air.

David Wise, coauthor of "The U-2 Affair," provided one possible explanation for Powers' behavior.

DAVID WISE: The pilots were told if they would push a button there would be a timing device that would then activate an explosive charge in so many seconds. Powers was told 70 seconds.

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And during that period of time, very short period of time, he would have to get out and eject and parachute to safety. It was that factor, that concern over how much time that the CIA gave the pilots to survive that led to the fact that the plane was intact and was not blown up. And this, in turn, led Eisenhower to issue the cover story, which he later regretted, privately and publicly, as the worst mistake of his Administration, the lie that was told, that the U-2 was a weather plane.